

By [John Basile](#)[Print Page](#)

January 14, 2016 10:54AM

## No progress in contract talks for community college staff

The union representing teachers, counselors and librarians at Cape Cod Community College is sharply criticizing the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education for seeking to tie part of the union's pay increase to factors such as graduation rates at community colleges statewide.

Members of the Massachusetts Community College Council have been working without a contract since the end of June when their previous deal expired. A major part of the impasse between the union and the Board of Higher Education is the state's offer to make 1 percent of a 3.5 percent pay raise in the final two years of a contract contingent upon graduation and retention rates at the state's 15 community colleges.

Claudine Barnes, Chairwoman of the Day Negotiations Team at Cape Cod Community College, said the union objects to the additional requirements, which were not part of the contract agreed to with instructors at the state's four-year colleges and universities.

Barnes said most community college instructors are not full-time teachers and the graduation requirement would be, "putting the burden on the 20-40 percent of courses taught by full-time instructors."

Barnes also said many community college students are part-time students, single parents and the first-generation college students, who often do not complete their community college education in the standard two-year time period.

"Our integrity is worth more than 1 percent," Barnes said, noting that community college instructors are not going to "push students through" the system in order to achieve graduation goals.

The union and administration are also at odds on a proposal by the administration that would give community college presidents the ability to select which instructors teach online courses. Barnes said the union wants online teaching to be voluntary. She contends online courses are far less costly to offer and are seen as a profit center for the state.

"Online courses are not for every student or for every faculty member," said Barnes, who is also the Secretary of the statewide Massachusetts Community College Council and Chapter President of the Cape Cod Community College Association.

The union is concerned that state officials have delayed the bargaining process first by waiting months to appoint a negotiating team and also by being slow to respond to concerns raised by the union during negotiating sessions.

Joe LeBlanc, MCCC president, said in a recent prepared statement negotiations have gone on long enough.

"After months of bargaining, our faculty and professional staff are still waiting for a fair deal that shows respect for our role in making our colleges work," LeBlanc said. "It's time for the Board of Higher Education and college presidents to settle this contract and get back to focusing on our students."

Katy Abel, spokeswoman for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, said in an email the department would not comment on ongoing negotiations.

Cape Cod Community College President John Cox also declined to comment on the negotiations because they are being conducted at the state level.

There have been more than 50 meetings between the union and state officials with no agreement on a contract.

Since November, MCCC members have been operating under what is called "work to rule" in protest of the lengthy contract negotiations. This means teachers who often work weekends and perform other functions not strictly outlined in their contract, are only doing what is required under the contract. Barnes said teachers frequently return student emails on weekends or meet with students outside of regular hours, but that has stopped since "work to rule" was started. The tactic is designed to draw the attention of the administration and students to the work done by community college staff.

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